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ABSTRACT

As a result of the manpower develcpment and training act of 1962, the need to know more about the labor market experience of United States citizens has been emphasized. The census bureau has been collecting data since 1966 cn the labor market experience of four groups ir our population: men 45-59 years of age, women 30-44, and young men and women 14-24. From this longitudinal study, although its findings are still premature, infcrmation indicates that: (1) job changes are nct as harmful fcr ycung men as heretofore considered; (2) possession both typing and shorthand skills for bcth ycung and mature black wcmen puts them in a better position in the labor market than those with neither skill or with typing alcne; (3) schools and counselors need tc take a much mcre realistic approach to girls who face tne problem of raising a family with inadequate education and training for wcrk; and (4) there is a need for continuing education and upgrading for mature women to prevent a downward occupaticnal movement when re-entering the labcr force. Questions are also raised concerning the need for a more flexible school system, more vocational training, better counseling services to black youth and better labor market information. (Author/TA)

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Recent Findings Underscoring the Need for Linking Counseling and Labor Market Information*

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The Department of Labor has, for more than a half century, been an important source of basic information about employment, unemployment and other data related to the labor market experience of our labor force. Although there has not been any substantive criticism of the technical accuracy nor objectivity of the data, some people in the Department have suggested that another type of information is needed to supplement the data now being collected.

The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 emphasized this need by placing new responsibilities upon the Secretary of Labor which required him to know more about the labor market experience of our citizens if he were to respond to new demands originating under the Act. Under the Manpower Act we had to have answers to questions such as when did a worker's difficulties develop. We also had to know which institutions were not fulfilling their responsibilities in serving our citizens. Furthermore, we were being asked why were so many people in our labor force not "making it" in our rapidly expanding economy. Without answers to these questions we could not develop meaningful programs nor help policy makers make intelligent decisions.

In order to respond to the Secretary's legislative responsibilities, the Manpower Administration decided that the best way to develop answers to these

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questions would be through a longitudinal study of the labor market experience of our workers. It should be made clear that the decision to move toward a longitudinal study was intended as a supplement to the on-going data programs for the Department rather than a substitute.

Why did the Manpower Administration decide to undertake a costly longitudinal study of labor market experience? The best analogy to explain the advantages of a longitudinal study over the data now being collected by the Department is to compare a motion picture with a single still photograph. The moving picture can do a better job of describing a process than a single set of statistics which describes the labor market condition of a person at a given point of time but does not pinpoint when, how, and why his difficulties may have begun.

Even prizefighters understand the difference and advantages of motion pictures over stills. I quote from a recent article about Muhammad Ali who may have achieved more fame as a fighter than a manpower expert but who had the perspicacity to comment about his recent exchange with Mr. Joe Frazier, the heavyweight Champion, "... that stills and drawings couldn't show the fight the way films could." Mr. Ali went on to say, "The stills only show one punch, but I was outpunching him in flurries." 1/

To some, comparing labor market experience with a prize fight may be stretching a point. To others, particularly those who fare poorly in the kind of preparation and services they receive before their entry into the world of work and their experience in adjusting to the job opportunities available to them in the labor market, this analogy may not be too remote.

1/ Washington Post, March 14, 1971, "Ali Wins Latest TV Round as Frazier Fails to Show."

The Longitudinal Study

Since 1966 the Census Bureau has been collecting data on the labor market experience of 4 groups in our population: men 45-59 years of age, women 30-44, and young men and women 14-24. These 4 groups were selected for the 5-year longitudinal study because each faces special labor market problems that challenge policy makers. For the young men and women, the problems revolve around the process of occupational choice and include both the preparation for work and the frequently difficult period of accommodation to the labor market after formal schooling has been completed. The special problems of the older men are reflected in the longer-than-average duration of their unemployment, when it occurs, and in the continuous decline in their annual income after they pass their mid-forties. For the women 30-44, their special problems are associated with re-entry into the labor force by married women whose children no longer require their continuous presence at home.

The Center for Human Resource Research of the Ohio State University developed the questionnaires and is analyzing the data. This longitudinal population study has two essential characteristics. First, it involves measurement or description of many characteristics of the same individuals at several points of time. Second, it involves analysis of relationships among the characteristics of these individuals at different times or of changes in one or more characteristics over time.

These unique sets of data about the labor market experience of four groups in our population have special significance for counselors who provide vocational guidance to young persons. Counselors will be able to watch the

process of change and adjustment as representative groups of young persons enter the labor force. These feed-back data are not based upon dubious retrospective information subject to the fallibilities of memory. We can objectively measure characteristics that are subject to change over time such as attitude. Finally, the reliability of responses can be checked against responses of the same person in previous surveys.

These longitudinal data are providing us with information about training, attitudes toward education, college experience, employment, unemployment, job experience, earnings, knowledge of the world of work, health and socio-economic background of the families of the respondents. In all cohorts, black persons are over-represented.

This paper will concentrate primarily on the information about the young men and women 14-24, which come from the monographs, "Career Thresholds: A Longitudinal Study of the Educational and Labor Market Experience of Male Youth," Volumes I and II and "Years for Decision: A Longitudinal Study of the Educational and Labor Market Experience of Young Women," Volume I. References will also be made to "Dual Careers: A Longitudinal Study of Labor Market Experience Women," Volume I, because some of the data from this report should forewarn us of what the future holds for some of the younger women already identified as being in trouble between the ages of 14 and 24. All of these volumes are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. 2/

2/ Other volumes in this series are: The Pre-Retirement Years, Volumes I and II

A. YOUNG MEN

What are we learning about the young men?

1. We are learning that the educational system, as it is now constituted is not geared to retaining a significant proportion of young men until they acquire a high school diploma. Our data show that dropping out of school is associated with low family income, being reared in broken homes, having a father with less than a high school education, possessing meager information about the world of work, and having poor access to magazines, newspapers and libraries. Obviously the schools cannot be held accountable for all these problems. The challenge to the schools is to provide sufficient flexibility in curricular and extra-curricular activities to make up for some of the handicaps facing the drop-outs. This calls for a different institution from the school system we now have if we are to retain students and help them to acquire the education and training needed to cope with an increasingly complex society.

Counselors who work in low income areas with disadvantaged youngsters have a special obligation not to participate in the institutional "pushing-out" of their clients. Many of these youngsters are smarter than those who stay. They have already recognized that the institution can or will do little to educate or train them unless they fit its norms. The easy way out is for a counselor to encourage dropping out. The real challenge is keeping the youngster in school and then trying to get an inflexible institution and an unhappy student to adjust to each other for a mutually rewarding experience.

2. Black youths who are no longer in school not only have less formal education than their white counterparts but they are much less likely to have had vocational training outside the regular school system.

The schools are not only not providing many black youth with traditional educational skills but are not giving them vocational skills. Some white youths are apparently making up for their vocational deficits by taking training after they leave school. However, the black youths are not doing as well in getting training outside the school system.

3. Neither school counselors nor Employment Service counselors are doing too well in reaching or helping black young men. Among students and nonstudents alike, employed youth found their current jobs largely by informal methods -- outside the regular school system.

The differences in labor market information between whites and blacks are dramatic. Of all those out of school, only 14 percent of the blacks, as compared with 46 percent of the whites, score high in knowledge of the world of work. Within every socio-economic level, the knowledge of black youth about the world of work is considerably lower than that of white youth.

4. Students enrolled in vocational curriculums have the lowest scores in information about the world of work. Vocational guidance and labor market information must be expanded and improved for vocational school students.

5. The amount of knowledge a young man has about the world of work is associated with how much skill he acquires and how much he earns.

6. Youngsters without library cards who do not get books, newspapers and magazines in the home know least about the world of work. A

greater effort must be made by the schools to expose youngsters to libraries and reading outside of text books.

7. Youths in the youngest age categories score lowest in information about the world of work. This suggests that high school students are making important educational decisions on the basis of relative ignorance. Youngsters should be exposed to information about training and educational requirements, earnings, working conditions and the employment outlook for particular occupations at an earlier age than they are now learning about this information relevant to the world of work.

8. Many of the youths in the longitudinal study have unrealistic occupational aspirations. This is particularly true for black youngsters. Even on the basis of the most optimistic assumptions about the rate of increase in opportunities for black youth, it seems almost certain that many of them will face unfilled expectations. Counselors must exert greater efforts to help youngsters make realistic assessments of their potential. Counseling of this nature must be done carefully with the proper concern for the possible effect on self-image which can destroy youthful dreams. The maturation processes produce rather substantial changes in professed occupational goals over a two-year period. Among the young men enrolled in school in 1966, two-fifths had by 1968 either developed an occupational goal or changed the one they had originally specified. There is some evidence that these changes are in the direction of greater "realism," at least in the sense of being consistent with educational experience. For example, of those who had specified a professional or technical

occupational goal in 1966, approximately a fourth of the whites and a third of the blacks had either revised this downward by 1968 or had become uncertain. But the corresponding ratio of movement out of the category of professional or technical occupations was considerably higher for those who were no longer enrolled in school, about two-fifths of each color group.

9. A substantial portion of the unemployment among youth occurs while they are still in school and thus antedates their transition to the status of full-time workers. Early labor market experience while in school appears to be helpful in enabling young men to make the transition from school to work. This suggests that greater effort should be made to use part-time work or work-study programs as a device for educating youngsters about the world of work.

10. Prior to these longitudinal studies much concern was expressed about the frequent job changes made by young men in their early labor force experience. The data from our study suggest that these changes are not as haphazard as they appear. Instead they indicate a healthy flexibility that permit early mistakes to be rectified and improvement in status to be made. Many of the job changes represent movements up the occupational and wage scale. The rates of job changes decline substantially with advancing age even within the narrow age range 14-24. This suggests that by the time they have reached their mid-twenties most young men, on the basis of experimentation with a variety of possibilities, have arrived at more realistic assessments of their labor force potential and have obtained jobs reasonably acceptable to them. This information is valuable to the student as well as the counselor in providing guidance.

11. Our evidence suggests that for a large majority of young men the labor market operates reasonably effectively in integrating them into the world of work. However, we cannot be complacent about the significant minority of youngsters for whom this is not true.

For these young men we need to do a better job in getting the right kind of occupational guidance reading material in their homes, in getting them to libraries, in teaching them about how to go about securing a job, in helping them to have realistic aspirations, in reaching them at an earlier age with good counseling and in helping them secure part-time employment. These young men need information on length and kind of training required so that they can make plans which will enable them to achieve their goals.

B. YOUNG WOMEN

Let me now turn to what we are learning about the young women 14-24.

1. Schools appear to have poor holding power for black girls. While one-fourth of the white girls out-of-school did not graduate from high school, this is true of almost one-half of the blacks.

2. Ninety-three percent of the employed white women 18-24 years of age who had completed high school, but had not gone on to college, had studied shorthand or typing while in school. This was true for only 78 percent of the black women. There is a real gap in shorthand courses for black girls. Students of both races 16 and 17 years of age who have completed courses in typing or in typing and shorthand have lower unemployment rates and higher rates of labor force participation than those who have not had such training.

Counselors should suggest that more black girls take typing and shorthand. This is not meant to suggest that this is the end of the road for black girls. Our longitudinal studies do suggest, however, that these skills will make them more employable and enable them to acquire income during and after high school. They can use both the skills and income to aim for higher occupational aspirations. Within both color groups (whites and blacks) those with typing and shorthand have the lowest level of unemployment.

3. Just as with the boys, the lack of magazines, newspapers and a library card in the homes affects knowledge of world of work of the girls and their labor force participation. Those girls who were not exposed to reading material at age 14 at home had a 10 percent lower labor force participation than those girls who did have access to these items.

4. Unemployed young female students, irrespective of color seem to display a marked lack of realism in their reported job requirements and desires. The data of our surveys imply a substantial need for improvement in the dissemination of labor market information to female students of all ages and color. The educational aspirations held by young girls 14 to 17 years of age are unrealistically high. Of the unmarried, childless young women 14 to 17 years of age enrolled in either elementary or high school, 70 percent of the whites and 71 percent of the blacks desire some post-secondary education. Actually, in 1967 only about 29 percent of women who were 20 to 24 years of age and 26 percent of those 25 to 29 years of age had completed one or more years of college. Again, this calls for realism in counseling.

5. Black girls not enrolled in school are much more likely than whites to be unmarried but to have children. More than one-third (37 percent) of the black girls 16-17 not enrolled in school were unmarried with children. Only 9 percent of the white girls in this age group who were not in school were not married with children. Of the 2.2 million black girls and women age 14-24 in the population,

some 289,000 are unmarried and have children.

This suggests that "guidance" or "counseling" as now practiced in schools must go beyond labor market and vocational information and include birth control information. Furthermore, if so large a percentage of young girls are not enrolled in school, are unmarried and mothers then we have to take a longer view and adjust our educational system to take this situation into account. Our school systems must face this problem realistically by providing continuing education and training opportunities for unwed mothers. Assistance should also be provided for child care facilities for these mothers while they attend classes. Otherwise, we are probably dooming both mothers and children to a life of poverty. Counselors, who above all should be interested in maximum utilization of our human resources, should bring this matter to the attention of those who administer schools and make educational policy.

Mature Women -- 30-44

When we look at the data being collected about the mature women 30 to 44 years of age we are essentially looking ahead to the future life of the 14-24 year old girls. Almost 50 percent of the "never-married" black women report they had children as compared with 4 percent of the white women. The 1970 Census data shows that the proportion of black families headed by women increased sharply in the nineteen-sixties to a level three times that of whites.[3/] About 27 percent of Negro families were headed by women in 1970. This compares with 22 percent in 1960. The white figure has remained at about 9 percent throughout the period. Some 3.2 million black children are in families with only one parent--usually the mother.

3/ New York Times, February 27, 1971, "Census Finds Rise in Negro Families Headed by Women"

6. The proportion of black women employed as clerical workers is disproportionately low in the private sector of the economy, but not in the government sector.

The longitudinal data suggest that Negro women have a better chance to secure a white collar job in the government than in private industry.

7. The findings from the mature women study confirm the typing-shorthand situation again. Eighty-six percent of the white respondents (women 30-44) with 12 years of schooling had typing or shorthand while in school. On the other hand, the same is true for only 54 percent of the black graduates.

8. We have some puzzling data on the downward occupational movement of mature black women. While 75 percent of the ever-married white women who began their work careers in the professional-technical category remained in the group, the same is true for only 54 percent of the black women. The remaining black women were much more likely to have moved to blue collar or nondomestic service positions. If these findings are confirmed in subsequent years it would appear apparent that up-grading training and continuing education should be stressed even more for black women than white women. We will, of course, have to know whether this downward movement may have been caused by part-time employment.

9. The longitudinal study may well contain a portent of the future. The mature women indicate a very strong commitment to work. About 66 percent of the black women and 60 percent of the white women said they would continue to work even if their family had enough money to live comfortably without working.

Counselors should be thinking about life-long work careers for women who have strong commitments to work. This requires some adjustment in thinking about education and training which recognizes that well over 50 percent of the women in the population will be back in the labor force after child-rearing ends at about age 45. For many women, work is an escape from the boredom of household chores and involves self-fulfillment in what they consider to be more productive employment.

Summary

Data collected from the same persons over a period of years will enable us to understand the labor market process for key groups in our population. We should learn more about when, why, and how attitudes toward work and careers change over time.

Although this preview of longitudinal findings is being offered far too soon before we move into the real analytical processes of the study we are learning enough to bring some information to stimulate the thinking of counselors, educators, youths, parents and those concerned with manpower problems.

We have raised questions about the possible need for a more flexible school system, more vocational training, better counseling services to black youths, the need for better labor market information for all youths. Counselors are needed who can provide assistance through appraisal of the potential of the youngsters they serve. The longitudinal studies indicate that early work experience in school eases the eventual transition from school to work. We are beginning to learn from just two years examination of the labor market experience of young men that job changes are not as harmful as heretofore considered for this group.

We believe that our early findings for both young and mature black women indicate that the possession of both typing and shorthand skills puts them in a far better position in the labor market than those who have just had typing or neither typing nor shorthand.

The problem of unmarried black girls with children who are not enrolled in school may be far greater than anticipated. If our follow-up studies continue to verify this situation, it would then appear that the schools and counselors will have to take a much more realistic approach to girls who face the problems of raising a family with inadequate education and training for work.

Our preliminary data on mature women may point to the need for the provision of continuing education and upgrading in order to prevent the downward occupational movement of mature women re-entering the labor force. Certainly, counselors should take into account the strong motivation to work that exists for so many women. This may

well call for a different assessment as to the vocational guidance now being provided to young women.

Let me conclude by noting that what I have presented is a progress report -- a very early one. The analysis and data to follow in the next few years may call upon us to change much of our thinking about vocational guidance. All modern counselors who are concerned with relevance and realistic counseling should be aware of this study and be prepared to examine the findings of these surveys with care.